

# Cavanagh.

The Great Conservation Novel

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE DOCTOR SEES LIZE.

LEE VIRGINIA said goodbye to Mrs. Redfield with grateful appreciation of her kindness, and especially of her invitation to come again, and the tears in her eyes profoundly affected the older woman, who, with a friendliness which was something more than politeness, invited her to come again. "Whenever Roaring Fork gets on your nerves we'll be very glad to rescue you," she said in parting.

Hugh Redfield the girl thoroughly understood and loved, he was so simple hearted and so loyal. On the way to the office he said to Lee, "I will talk to the doctor if you like."

"I wish you would," she responded fervently.

She remained in the machine while he went in, and as she sat there a train passed on its downward eastward run, and a feeling of loneliness, of helplessness, filled her heart. Now that she was within sight of the railway the call of the east, the temptation to escape all her discomforts, was almost great enough to carry her away, but into her mind came the thought of the ranger, the thought of her own duties once more, comforted by the words of praise he had spoken and by the blaze of admiration in his eyes.

Redfield came out, followed by a small man carrying a neat bag.

"You'd better sit behind, doctor," said Redfield. "I shall be very busy on this trip."

"Very well," replied the other, "if Miss Wetherford remains beside me; otherwise I shall rebel."

He began by asking a few questions about her mother's way of life, but as Lee was not very explicit he became impersonal and talked of whatsoever came into his mind—motorcars, irrigation, hunting, flowers, anything at all—and the girl had nothing to do but to utter an occasional phrase to show that she was listening. It was all rather depressing to her, for she could not understand how a man so glib could be a good physician. She was quite sure her mother would not treat him with the slightest respect.

After all, he talked well. His stream of conversation shortened the way for her. Soon they were rolling quietly up the street to the door of the Wetherford house.

They found Lize on duty behind the counter, as usual. Her face was dejected, her eyes dull, but as she caught sight of the strange little man she cried out, "Why didn't you bring me a man, Reddy?"

"Hush, mother," cautioned Lee. "This is the famous eastern physician."

"You can't be famous for your beauty; you must be brainy," she remarked to herself in the stranger's hearing.

Redfield presented "Dr. Fessenden of Omaha."

She started again on contemptuous ways, but was stopped by the little man. "Get down out of that chair!" he commanded. "My time is money!" Lize flushed with surprise and anger, but obeyed, and Lee Virginia, secretly delighted with the physician's imperative manner, led the way into the lodging house. "I'll look after the cash, mother," she said. "Don't worry."

"I'm not worrying," she replied. "But what does that little fellow mean by talking to me like that? I'll swat him one if he isn't careful!"

"It's his way. Please don't anger him. You need his help."

The doctor interferred. "Now, madam, strip and let's see what's the matter with you," whereupon he laid off his coat and opened his box of instruments.

Lee fled, and Redfield, who had remained standing beside the counter, could not repress a smile. "She's caught a tartar this time."

"Poor mother! How dreadfully ill she looks today! I hope the doctor will order her to rest."

"But will she obey? I've argued that with her. She keeps saying she will, but she won't."

It was nearly 1, but the customers were coming in, and the girl, laying

aside her hat and veil, took her seat at the cash register, while Red-

field

went out to put his machine in order for the return trip. She realized that she was now at close hand grapple with life.

Her glowing cheeks, her pretty dress made her a shining mark, and the men began at once to improve their opportunity by asking, "Where's Lize?" And this embarrassed her, for the reason that she did not care to go into the cause of her mother's temporary absence.

Perceiving her nervousness, Neill Ballard raised loud outcry over a mistake she made in returning change, and this so confused and angered her that her eyes misted with tears, and she blundered sadly with the next customer. His delight in her discomfort, his words, his grin, became unendurable, and in a flush of rage and despair she sprang to her feet and left them to make triumphant exit. "I got her rattled," he roared as he went out. "She'll remember me."

The diners were all smiling, and Gregg took a malicious satisfaction in her defeat. She had held herself haughtily apart from him, and he was glad to see her humbled.

Leaving her place behind the counter, she walked through the room with uplifted head and burning eyes, her heart filled with bitterness and fire. She hated the whole town, the whole state at the moment. Where these "chivalrous short grass knights" she had heard so much about—these large souled "western founders of empire!" At the moment she was in the belief that all the heroes of her childhood had been of the stamp of Neill Ballard.

In the hall her pride, her sense of duty, came back to her, and she halted her fleeing feet. "I will not be beaten," she declared, and her lips straightened. "I will not let these dreadful creatures make a fool of me in this way."

Thereupon she turned and went back, pale now, but resolved to prove herself the mistress of the situation. Fortunately Redfield had returned, and his serene presence helped her to recover complete control of herself. She remained coldly blank to every compliment, and by this means she subdued them.

The doctor, appearing suddenly in the door, beckoned to her, and, leaving her place, she crossed to where he stood. "Your mother needs you," he said curtly. "Go to her and keep her quiet for an hour or two if you can."

"What is the matter, doctor?"

"I can't tell you precisely, but you must get her on a diet and keep her there. I will write out some lists for you after my luncheon."

Lee found her mother sitting in such dejection as she had never known her to display, though she fired up sufficiently to say: "That cursed little thimblefinger has been throwing a great big scare into me. He says I've got to get outdoors, live on raw meat and weak tea and walk five miles a day. That's what he says," she added in renewed astonishment at the man's audacity. "Who's at the cash?"

"Mr. Redfield," replied Lee. "I'll go right back."

"No, you won't. I'm no dead horse yet." She struggled to her feet and started for the cash register. "I won't let no little Omaha doughtie like that put me out of business."

Despite all warnings she walked out into the dining room and took her accustomed seat with set and stern face, while her daughter went to the table where the doctor sat and explained her inability to manage her mother.

"That's your problem," he replied coolly. Then rapidly, succinctly and clearly he went over the case and laid out a course of treatment. Out of it all Lee deduced that her mother was very ill indeed, though not in danger of sudden death.

"She's on the chute," said Fessenden. "and everything depends upon her own action whether she takes the plunge this winter or twenty years from now. She's a strong woman, or has been, but she has presumed upon her strength. She used to live out of doors, she tells me, during all her early life, and now, shut in by these walls, working sixteen hours a day, she is killing herself. Get her out if you can and cut out stimulants."

As he rose and approached the counter Lize shoved a couple of gold pieces across the board. "That wipes you off my map," she grimly declared. "I hope you enjoyed your ride."

"It's up to you, madam," he replied, pocketing the gold. "Good day!"

"I'll be down again in a day or two," called Redfield.

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# Forest



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and the wheels to spin, and Lee Virginia was left to face her mother's obstinate resistance alone. She felt suddenly very desolate, very weak and very poor. "What if mother should die?" she asked herself.

Gregg was standing before the counter talking with Lize as Lee returned, and he said, with a broad smile, "I've just been saying I'd take this hotel off your mother's hands provided you went with it."

In the mouths of some men these words would have been harmless enough, but coming from the tongue of one whose life could only be obscurely hinted at the jest was an insult. The girl shuddered with repulsion, and Lize spoke out:

"Now, see here, Bullfrog, I'm dead on the hoof and all that, but neither you nor any other citizen like you can be funny with my girl. She's not for you. Now, that's final! She ain't your kind."

She turned to Lee. "I'm hungry. Where's that grub chart of mine?"

Lee brought the doctor's page of notes and read it through, while her mother snorted at intervals: "Hah! Dry toast, weak tea, no coffee, no alcohol. Huh! I might as well starve! Eggs—fish—milk! Why didn't he say boiled live lobsters and champagne? I tell you right now I'm not going to go into that kind of a game. If I die I'm going to die eating what I blame please!"

The struggle had begun. With desperate courage Lee fought, standing squarely in the rut of her mother's daily habit. "You must not live up here any longer," she insisted. "You must get out and walk and ride. I can take care of the house, at least till we can sell it."

It was like breaking the pride of an athlete, but little by little she forced upon her mother a realization of her true condition, and at last Lize consented to offer the business for sale.

Lee longed for the presence of Ross Cavanagh at this moment, when all her little world seemed tumbling into ruin, and almost in answer to her wordless prayer came a messenger from the little telephone office. "Some one wants to talk to you."

She answered this call hurriedly, thinking at first that it must be Mrs. Redfield. The booth was in the little sitting room of a private cottage, and the mistress of the place, a shrewd little woman with inquisitive eyes, said, "Sounds to me like Ross Cavanagh's voice."

Lee was thankful for the booth's privacy, for her cheeks flamed up at this remark, and when she took up the receiver her heart was beating so loud it seemed as if the person at the other end of the wire must hear it. "Who is it, please?" she asked, with breathless intensity.

A man's voice came back over the wire so clear, so distinct, so intimate, it seemed as if he were speaking into her ear. "It is I, Ross Cavanagh. I want to ask how your mother is."

"She is terribly disheartened by what the doctor has said, but she is in no immediate danger."

He perceived her agitation and was instantly sympathetic. "Can I be of use? Do you need me? If you do I'll come down."

"Where are you?"

"I am at the sawmill, the nearest telephone station."

"How far away are you?"

"About thirty miles."

"Oh!" She expressed in this little sound her disappointment, and as it trembled over the wire he spoke quickly: "Please tell me! Do you want me to come down? Never mind the distance. I can ride it in a few hours."

She was tempted, but bravely said: "No; I'd like to see you, of course, but the doctor said mother was in no danger. You must not come on our account."

He felt the wonder of the moment's intercourse over the wilderness steeps and said so. "You can't imagine how strangely sweet and civilized your voice sounds to me here in this savage place. It makes me hope that some day you and Mrs. Redfield will come up and visit me in person."

"I should like to come."

"Perhaps it would do your mother good to camp for awhile. Can't you persuade her to do so?"

"I'm trying to do that—I mean, to stop work—but she says, 'What can we do to earn a living?'"

"If nothing happens I hope to spend an hour or two at the Fork next Sunday. I hope to find your mother better."

Their words were of this unemotional sort, but in their voices something subtler than the electrical current vibrated. He called to her in wordless fashion, and she answered in the same mysterious code, and when she said "Goodbye!" and hung up the receiver her world went suddenly gray and commonplace, as if a ray of special sunlight had been withdrawn.

# Ranger

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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CHAPTER X.

THE POACHERS.

ONE morning as he topped the rise between the sawmill and his own station Cavanagh heard two rifle shots in quick succession snapping across the high peak on his left. Bringing his horse

to a stand, he unstung his fieldglasses and slowly and minutely swept the tawny slopes of Sheep Mountain, from which the forbidden sounds seemed to come.

"A herder shooting coyotes," was his first thought. Then, remembering that there were no camps in that direction and that a flock of mountain sheep (which he had been guarding carefully) habitually fed round that grassy peak, his mind changed. "I wonder if those fellows are after those sheep," he mused as he angled down the slope. "I reckon it's up to me to see."

In less than three hours he was over on the trail in the canyon, quite certain that the hunters were still above him. He rode quietly up the valley, pausing often to listen and to scrutinize the landscape, but no sign of campfire and no further rifle shots came, and at last he went into camp upon the trail, resolved to wait till the poachers appeared, a ward which his experience as a soldier helped him to maintain without nodding.

In these long hours his thought played about the remembrance of his last visit to the Fork and his hour with Lee. He wondered what she was doing at the moment. How charming she had looked there at Redfield's—so girlish in form, so serious and womanly of face!

He felt as never before the ineludible loneliness of the ranger's life. The guardians of these high places must forever be solitary. No ranger could rightfully be husband and father, for to bring women and children into these solitudes would be cruel.

He put all this aside—for the time—by remembering that he was a soldier under orders and that marriage was a long way off, and so smoked his pipe and waited for the dawn, persistent as a Sioux and as silent as a fox.

At daylight, there being still no sign of his quarry, he saddled his horse and was about to ride up the trail when he caught the sound of voices and the sharp click of iron hoofs on the rocks above him. With his horse's bridle in his arm he awaited the approaching horsemen, resolute and ready to act.

As two marauders rounded the elbow in the trail he was surprised to

recognize in the leader young Gregg. The other man was a stranger, an older man, with a grizzled beard, and tall and stooping figure.

"Hello, Joe!" called the ranger. "You're astir early?"

The youth's fat face remained imperturbable, but his eyes betrayed uneasiness. "Yes, it's a long pull into town."

"Been hunting?" queried the ranger, still with cheery, polite interest.

"Oh, no; just visiting one of my sheep camps."

Cavanagh's voice was a little less suave. "Not on this creek," he declared. "I moved your herder last week." He walked forward. "That's a heavy load for a short trip to a sheep camp." He put his hand on the pack. "I guess you'll have to open this, for I heard two shots yesterday morning up where that flock of mountain sheep is running, and, furthermore, I can see blood stains on this saddle blanket."

Gregg threw out a hand in command. "Open it up, Edwards!" he said sullenly.

Off came the outfit, and under the tent lay the noble head of a wild ram, a look of reproach still in his splendid yellow eyes.

Cavanagh's face hardened. "I thought so. Now leave it back and clinch up. It's you to the nearest magistrate, which happens to be Higley of Roaring Fork. I'll make an example of you fellows."

There was nothing for Gregg to say and nothing for Edwards to do but obey, for a resolute ranger with an excellent weapon of the latest and most approved angular pattern stood ready to enforce his command, and when the pack was reined Cavanagh waved an imperative hand. "I guess I'll have to take charge of you guys," he said, and they yielded without a word of protest. "Now march! Take the left hand trail!"

A couple of hours of silent travel brought them to the ranger's cabin, and there he ordered a dismount.

As the coffee was boiling he lectured them briefly. "You fellows are not entirely to blame," he remarked philosophically. "You've been educated to think a game warden a joke and Uncle Sam a long way off. But things have changed a bit. The law of the state has made me game warden, and I'm going to show you how it works. It's my duty to see that you go down the road—and down you go!"

Edwards, the guide, was plainly very uneasy and made several attempts to reach Cavanagh's private

ear and at last succeeded. "I've been fooled into this," he said. "I was hard up and a stranger in the country, and this young fellow hired me to guide him across the range. I didn't shoot a thing. I swear I didn't. If you'll let me off I'll hit the trail to the west and never look back. Don't take me down the road. Let me off!"

"I can't do that," replied Cavanagh, but his tone was kinder, for he perceived that the old fellow was thin, hollow chested and poorly clad. "You knew you were breaking the laws, didn't you?"

This the culprit admitted. "But I was working for Sam Gregg, and when Joe asked me to go show him the trail I didn't expect to get enmeshed in killing game. I didn't fire a shot—now that's the truth."

"Nevertheless," retorted Ross, "you were packing the head, and I must count you in the game."

Edwards fell silent then, but something in his look deepened the ranger's pity. His eyes were large and dark, and his face so emaciated that he seemed fit only for a sanitarium.

The trip to the Fork (timed to the gait of a lazy pack horse) was a tedious eight hours' march, and it was nearly 7 o'clock when they arrived at the outskirts of the village.

To the casual observer in a town of this character there was nothing specially noticeable in three horsemen driving a pack horse, but to those whose eyes were keen the true relationship of the ranger to his captives was instantly apparent, and when they alighted at Judge Higley's office a bunch of eager observers quickly collected.

"Hello, Joe! What luck?" called Ballard.

"Our luck was a little too good—we caught a game warden," replied the young scapegrace.

The ranger was chagrined to find the office of the justice closed for the day and, turning to his captives, said: "I'm hungry, and I've no doubt you are. I'm going to take you into Mike Halsey's saloon for supper, but remember you are my prisoners."

In fifteen minutes the town was rumbling with the news. Under Ballard's devilry all the latent hatred of the ranger and all the concealed opposition to the forest service came to the surface like the scum on a pot of broth. The saloons and eating houses boiled with indignation. "What business is it of Ross Cavanagh's?" they demanded. "What call has he to interfere? He's not a game warden."

"Yes, he is. All these rangers are game wardens," corrected another.

"No, they're not. They have to be commissioned by the governor."

"Well, he's been commissioned. He's warden all right."

"I don't believe it. Anyhow, he's too fresh. He needs to have a halt. Let's do him. Let's bluff him out."

Lee Virginia was in the kitchen superintending the service when one of the waiters came in breathless with excitement. "Ross Cavanagh has shot Joe Gregg for killing sheep!"

Lee faced her with blanched face. "Who told you so?"

"They're all talking about it out there. Gee, but they're hot! Some of 'em want to lynch him."

Lee hurried out into the dining room, which was crowded with men and voicing deep excitement.

A half dozen men were standing before the counter talking with Lize, but Lee pushed in to inquire with white, inquiring face: "What is it all about? What has happened?"

"Nothing much," Lize replied contemptuously, "but you'd think a horse had been stole. Ross has nipped Joe Gregg and one of his herders for killing mountain sheep."

"Do you mean he shot them?"

"Yes; he took their heads."

Lee stood aghast. "What do you mean? Whose heads?"

Lize laughed. "The sheep's heads. Oh, don't be scared! No one is hurt yet."

The girl flushed with confusion as the men roared over her blunder. "One of the girls told me Mr. Cavanagh had killed a man," she explained. "Where is he?"

Lize betrayed annoyance. "They say he's taking supper at Mike Halsey's, though why he didn't come here I don't see. What's he going to do?" she asked. "Won